



St. Matthew's Cathedral eNews

Christ + Compassion + Community

From the Dean

Breaking Out of the Ordinary

I absolutely *love* Christmas Eve midnight services—both as a priest who is responsible for leading them and as a Christian who participates in and attends them. I love the festive nature of the service. I love the greenery, and the candles, finally lighting the four advent candles and the Christ candle in the middle. I love the music: the Christmas carols that sound forth in joyful celebration of the birth of Jesus, the special music performed as offerings to the Babe in the manger just as gold, frankincense, and myrrh were presented to Him. I love the stillness of the night as we sing “Silent Night.” I love receiving communion on that night because it puts in perspective why that night is so special.

This is all made particularly special for me by the fact that the service is held in the still of the night. It breaks me out of the ordinary. 10:30 to midnight is not a normal time for a worship service. It’s really an inconvenient time. To be home in front of a fire, all snuggled in for the evening would satisfy my desire for creature comforts. But this night is different. I am less in need of comfort than I am of awe and worship.

Yes, this is a night of awe and worship—*that’s* what is so special about this night: awe and worship. On this night especially, I am pulled outside of my daily activities and drawn to the House of the Lord: to sit in awe and worship, to sing praises, to celebrate the sacred mysteries of salvation, to wonder at the Incarnation—God become man that man might touch God.

Yes, this night is special for me because I will do as Mary did: on this night, in the quiet of the night, I will “treasure them and ponder all these things in [my] heart.”